



Washington State Health Care Authority

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 20, 2008
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Three Pilot Projects to Receive State Grants Totaling \$1.7 Million to Test Consumer Managed Health Record Banks

Regional Projects in Spokane, Cashmere and Bellingham to Explore Patients Accessing Online Health Information Using Community-based Solutions in Conjunction with Microsoft® HealthVault™ and Google Health

OLYMPIA, August 20, 2008 – Starting in early 2009, more than 18,000 Washingtonians in three different communities will have the opportunity to organize and manage access to their own health information under separate health record bank pilot project grants from the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA). The three community grant recipients announced by the HCA include: Spokane-based Inland Northwest Health Services, Cashmere-based Community Choice Healthcare Network, and Bellingham-based St. Joseph Hospital Foundation and The Critical Junctions Institute.

"The state Legislature charged HCA in 2005 and 2007 with the responsibility to improve information sharing for Washington's health care communities," said Steve Hill, administrator of the Health Care Authority. "Today, no one has access to their complete health information – parts of which are stored at multiple locations where care is provided. It is difficult for patients or medical personnel to easily see the entirety of a patient's medical information; clearly this is needed to provide the best care."

Each health record bank pilot project is a public-private partnership that will help test the feasibility and usefulness of online health record bank accounts to see if they offer a useful way for consumers to maintain, track and use their personal health information.

The Health Care Authority will be closely monitoring the usage and benefits of the health record bank pilots. Using this new technology, patients will have the ability to view and share a copy of their health information – without having to recreate the records from mounds of information, prescriptions and medical information.

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The projects will begin work immediately, and are expected to be operational starting in February 2009. The pilot project awards are:

Inland Northwest Health Services in Spokane, \$583,377.00, in conjunction with Google Health

Community Choice Healthcare Network in Cashmere, \$551,448.00, in conjunction with Microsoft HealthVault

St. Joseph Hospital Foundation and the Critical Junctions Institute in Bellingham, \$598,352.00, in conjunction with Microsoft HealthVault

The grant program is administered by the HCA in collaboration with the Health Information Infrastructure Advisory Board (HIIAB) – a statewide board that advises HCA on strategy for adoption and use of electronic health information and electronic medical records in the state’s health care community.

“This project will give us the opportunity to expand on several years of experience in Whatcom County with the Shared Care Plan personal health record,” said Marc Pierson, MD and regional vice president of clinical information at St. Joseph Hospital in Bellingham. “Consumers accessing and documenting their own health information – and sharing it with their doctors – helps physicians and patients to work together for better outcomes. We need these pilots to learn more about the benefits and any possible pitfalls from this consumer-enabling approach. This is an opportunity to strengthen the partnership between patient and physician.”

“INHS connects 38 hospitals, multiple reference laboratories, emergency services, regional imaging centers and physicians with more than 2.8 million health records,” said Tom Fritz, chief executive officer of Inland Northwest Health Services. “Making health information available online to patients, families, caregivers and health consumers is a critical step toward a more streamlined health care system.”

“While a growing number of our health care providers are using electronic medical records, we have a very small number of patients that have ready access to their personal health information in an electronic format – let alone in a way that can be proactively used with their doctor,” said Jesus Hernandez, executive director of Community Choice, PHCO. “Regional organizations of all kinds in Chelan, Douglas, Grant and Okanogan counties will work with us to build a robust health record bank that facilitates greater participation by consumers in their health care.”

Washington Governor Chris Gregoire and the Legislature have long advocated the use of technology to reduce expensive redundancies in health care, and to better share information between providers and patients. The information is supplied by various health care sources.

For more details about online health information, visit www.AccessMyHealth.org, a partnership of Washingtonians exploring ways to improve patients’ access to their personal health information through health record banks. The AccessMyHealth.org Web site and surveys are part of a broader effort of the HCA to develop a strategy for adoption and use of online personalized health records in the state’s health care community.

Everyone is encouraged to provide feedback: Washingtonians can take two online surveys about online health records by visiting www.AccessMyHealth.org and clicking on “Take a Survey” in the upper right hand corner of the home page. AccessMyHealth.org will protect the privacy of everyone’s personal information to the full extent of the law; the organization will not share email addresses or other personal information with any other party for commercial purposes.